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ABSTRACT

A survey of female administrators in California community colleges focused on biographical information, attitudes toward career development and issues related to being female administrators, advice to aspiring women administrators, and information about the differences between male and female administrators and about frustrations. Of California's 571 administrators, 47 were female; of these, 37 (78.7%) responded. Findings related to career development included: 95% had been in leadership positions throughout their lives; 81% had always planned a professional career, though 70% had not always planned to be administrators; both parents influenced career development; 19% said family responsibilities had delayed their career; 65% had ambitions to advance to higher positions; most respondents had male, rather than female, role models; and 65% never had a female supervisor. The survey also revealed that: 65% felt they, more than males, were required to prove their competence; 65% felt an advantage in being female, though 68% said at times it had been a disadvantage; 46% reported that their family circumstances had been taken into consideration by potential employers; and 35% felt they had been turned down for positions because they were female. Aspiring administrators were advised of the need for diverse experience and training, the desirability of a doctorate, and the need to actively seek leadership roles. (MB)

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A STUDY OF WOMEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS IN CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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INTRODUCTION

The hazards faced by women executives in the male-dominated world of business management have been the subject of current books and articles in popular journals. A recent issue of California, for example, contained an article entitled "New Girls vs. the Old Boys"[1] that tells of support systems being formed by business women to make up for their long denied access to the social circles of their male counterparts.

"The Challenge of the Sexes,"[2] in an earlier issue of the same magazine, presented a discussion of how male executives feel about the "woman in the three-piece suit."

A Psychology Today article, "Women Executives in the Old Boy Network,"[3] pointed out that women executives must learn the informal rules that men take for granted in their business dealings.

Recent book titles about women in management include The Managerial Woman,[4] The New Executive Woman,[5] and Games Mother Never Taught You.[6] A common theme in these publications is that there are socialized differences between males and females; and in the male-dominated world of the business executive, women are at a disadvantage unless they understand and are prepared to play the game according to male established rules.

Is the woman in community college administration confronted with the same hazards and frustrations as women executives in business? Does she enter a game played primarily by male players, with rules for which she has had little training, and where there are few, if any, women players to serve as role models? Does the woman administrator, like her counterpart in business, have to prove she is competent, while men administrators are considered competent until they prove to the contrary? Does she experience exclusion from the informal communication channels of the "old boy network?" Is she viewed as stereotypically female? Is she discriminated against because of her sex?

What differences, if any, do women administrators perceive between themselves and their male colleagues? What advice do successful women administrators have for women seeking careers in educational administration?

To answer these questions, the author conducted a study of women currently in upper-level administrative positions in California community colleges.

PROCEDURES

The population sample was selected from the 1978-79 edition of the California Community College Chancellor's Office Directory in which were identified 571 administrators with the titles of Chancellor, Superintendent, President, Vice Chancellor, Assistant Chancellor, Assistant Superintendent, Vice President, Assistant to the President, Provost, and Dean.

Table 1 indicates the number and percent of male and female California community college administrators, by level, at the Dean position and higher. Among these 571 administrators, 47 (8.2%)were women.

In April, 1979, a survey instrument was sent to each of the 47 women administrators. Thirty-seven (78.7%)of the 47 women administrators responded to the survey.

Biographical data from the survey are displayed in Table 2. Twenty-five (67.6%)of the respondents were between the ages of 35 and 50, twenty-one (56.8%) had been in administration for ten or more years, and eighteen (48.6%) had completed doctorates. Eighteen (48.6%) were married at the time of the survey, two (5.4%) had children younger than 13 years of age, and seventeen (45.9%) reported they had no children. In birth position among siblings, the greatest number, twelve (32.4%) were oldest siblings.

FINDINGS OF THE CHECKLIST ITEMS

The survey included items related to issues raised in the literature regarding women business executives. Respondents indicated "A" (Definitely True), "B" (Generally True), "C" (Only Slightly True), and "D" (Not True) to sixteen items on a checklist. The results of the checklist survey are reported in Table 3.

For the purpose of this report, the response to an item was considered "true" if the respondent indicated "Definitely True" or "Generally True;" the findings were considered "not true" if the respondent indicated "Not True" or "Only Slightly True."

Career Development

The California community college women administrators surveyed were pleased with careers in administration; all indicated that they enjoy community college administration.

Some of the items focused upon the career development of these administrators. Thirty-five (94.6%) reported that they have been in leadership positions throughout their lives, and thirty (81.1%) always planned on a professional career. However, twenty-six (70.3%) reported that they ended up in administration without having planned for an administrative career.

Both parents had a significant influence upon the career development of these administrators: twenty-five (67.6%) reported that their mothers, and twenty-four (64.9%) reported that their fathers had a significant influence. Responding as to whether family responsibilities had delayed their entering an administrative career, only seven (18.9%) said this was true.

MALE AND FEMALE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS 1978-79

DEAN LEVEL AND HIGHER *

TABLE I

	Male		Female		Tota
	#	%	#	%	
Chancellor Superintendent President	119	95.2%	6	4.8%	125
Vice Chancellor Assistant Chancellor Assistant Superintendent Vice President Assistant to the President	108	93.1%	8	6.9%	116
Provost Dean	297	90.0%	33	10.0%	330
Total	524	91.8%	47	8.2%	571

* As reported in the California Community Colleges Directory, 1978-79, Chancellor's Office, California Community Colleges, Sacramento.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF THE THIRTY-SEVEN WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS

TABLE 2

Age	Under 35 Years		35-50 Years		Over 50 Years		No Response	
	3	8.1%	25	67.6%	8	21.6%	1	2.7%
Number of Years in Educational Administration	3 Years or Less		4-9 Years		10 Years or More			
	5	13.5%	11	29.7%	21	56.8%		
Highest Degree	BA		MA or MS		Ph.D. or Ed.D.			
	4	10.8%	15	40.5%	18	48.6%		
Marital Status	Single		Married		Divorced		Widowed		No Response	
	10	27%	18	48.6%	5	13.5%	3	8.1%	1	2.7%
Ages of Children	No Children		Youngest Under 13 Years		Youngest 13-18 Years		Youngest 19 Years or Older	
	17	45.9%	2	5.4%	7	18.9%	11	29.7%
Position Among Siblings	Only Child		Oldest Sibling		Middle Sibling		Youngest Sibling	
	8	21.6%	12	32.4%	8	21.6%	9	24.3%

RESPONSES BY WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS TO CHECKLIST ITEMS ON THE SURVEY

TABLE 3

	Definitely True		Generally True		Only Slightly True		Not True		No Response	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. I enjoy community college administration	25	67.6%	11	29.7%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2.7%
2. Throughout my life I have been involved in leadership positions.	20	54.1%	15	40.5%	2	5.4%	0	0%	0	0%
3. I always planned to have a professional career.	23	62.2%	7	18.9%	6	16.2%	1	2.7%	0	0%
4. My father had a significant positive influence upon my career development.	15	40.5%	9	24.3%	6	16.2%	6	16.2%	1	2.7%
5. My mother had a significant positive influence upon my career development.	14	37.8%	11	29.7%	8	21.6%	4	10.8%	0	0%
6. I ended up in administration without really having planned for an administrative career.	15	40.5%	11	29.7%	5	13.5%	6	16.2%	0	0%
7. Due to family commitments I delayed entering an administrative career.	5	13.5%	2	5.4%	5	13.5%	25	67.6%	0	0%
8. I have ambitions to advance to higher administrative positions.	13	35.1%	11	29.7%	5	13.5%	7	18.9%	1	2.7%
9. In my professional career I have had a woman as a direct administrative supervisor.	11	29.7%	1	2.7%	2	5.4%	22	59.5%	1	2.7%
10. In my career development there has been one or more significant male mentors or role models.	23	62.2%	10	27.0%	3	8.1%	1	2.7%	0	0%
11. In my career development there has been one or more significant female mentors or role models.	10	27.0%	6	16.2%	11	29.7%	9	24.3%	1	2.7%
12. My experience as a female administrator is that I have to prove that I am competent, whereas a male with the same credentials is assumed to be competent unless he proves to the contrary.	13	35.1%	11	29.7%	9	24.3%	4	10.8%	0	0%
13. There have been times in my career development when being a woman has been an advantage.	10	27.0%	14	37.8%	10	27.0%	3	8.1%	0	0%
14. There have been times in my career development when being a woman has been a disadvantage.	17	45.9%	8	21.6%	11	29.7%	1	2.7%	0	0%
15. I have had experiences in seeking positions in which my family circumstances were considered in the selection (marital status, ages of children, etc.).	12	32.4%	5	13.5%	5	13.5%	15	40.5%	0	0%
16. I have reason to believe that I have been turned down for administrative positions because I am a woman.	8	21.6%	5	13.5%	7	18.9%	16	43.2%	1	2.7%

The women were in general ambitious, as twenty-four (64.9%) reported that they have ambitions to advance to higher administrative positions. Most respondents had male role models, but few had female role models: only four (10.8%) indicated that they did not have one or more significant male mentors or role models, whereas twenty (54.1%) reported that they did not have one or more significant female mentors or role models; twenty-four (64.9%) reported they had not had a woman as a direct supervisor.

Issues Related to Being Female

Some of the items inquired about career experiences related to the fact that the administrators were female rather than male. Twenty-four (64.9%) concurred that their experience has been that they must prove they are competent while their counterparts are assumed to be competent. Regarding whether there have been times when it has been an advantage or a disadvantage to be female, twenty-four (64.9%) responded that it has been an advantage at times, and twenty-five (67.6%) responded that at times it has been a disadvantage.

Seventeen (45.9%) reported that they have had experiences in seeking positions when family circumstances, such as marital status and ages of children, have been taken into consideration. Thirteen (35.1%) of the women indicated that they have reason to believe they have been turned down for administrative positions because they are women.

RESPONSES TO THE OPEN-ENDED SURVEY ITEMS

There were four open-ended items that were responded to by 34 (72.3%) of the 37 respondents: "What advice do you have for a woman just beginning, or planning for, a career in community college administration?" How do you think women administrators are different from men administrators?" "What would you like other professionals to know about any frustrations associated with being a woman community college administrator?" "Please make any comments or share any anecdotal experiences."

Advice for Women Aspiring to Administrative Careers

In response to the question regarding advice they have for women planning an administrative career, respondents frequently mentioned the need for diverse experience and training, particularly in the areas of finance, management,and data processing. They also suggested a need for knowledge in decision making, planning, and politics. A number of them recommended obtaining a doctoral degree.

In addition to acquiring a breadth of experience, some advised becoming an expert in some phase of instruction or student services and actively seeking leadership roles through committees and other activities on campus. Others suggested setting goals in career planning rather than waiting and allowing things to just happen.

Frequently respondents pointed out that those aspiring to careers in administration will have to work harder, longer, and be more dedicated than

their male colleagues. They will have to be able to channel energies in many directions. The importance of competence and professional confidence were stressed.

Keep outwardly calm, taking the good and bad in stride, they advised. Keep a sense of humor and be flexible. Don't let inequities disturb you, a few advised. Don't crusade for women's rights, and use tact in consciousness raising.

Some discussed the importance of women taking risks and making decisions, as women are frequently seen as afraid to take risks. It was pointed out that while women need to be assertive, they must learn to negotiate; being assertive does not mean always winning or pushing a point. Be assertive, not aggressive.

A number of respondents stated that it is important that a husband and family be supportive of the woman administrator's professional career.

Differences Between Women and Men Administrators

In response to the question as to how they thought women administrators differed from their male colleagues, a substantial number reported that differences cannot be generalized; among women administrators, just as among men, there are some that are effective and some that are not.

Most respondents, however, did suggest some differences. Some indicated that women administrators frequently have attributes that the respondents considered to be strengths in management: women are more humanistic; more open and honest; do not play games; are frequently more competent; and more thorough and work harder.

Other attributes reported by a few of the respondents were that women administrators are more organized, more reasonable, and more flexible. They usually do not identify their personal worth with their positions as do men with "male egos."

Some described characteristics of women administrators that can cause difficulties for women in management: they are less experienced in the game of politics and less experienced in finance and management; they are less assertive than their male colleagues, and the competitive instinct has been stifled in women and nurtured in men. Because they are more inclined to be perfectionists, women administrators are more vulnerable to disappointment and criticism and as a result experience feelings of depression more frequently.

Women seem less inclined than men to plan their careers by setting goals, but tend, instead, to just let things "happen." It was also pointed out by a few that women more frequently have trouble with secretaries and that they have more difficulty in relating to what is best for the institution rather than just their own departments.

Frustrations Associated with Being a Woman Administrator

Survey participants were asked what they would like other professionals to know about frustrations associated with being a woman community college

administrator. Some respondents stated that there were none; frustrations are associated with the job rather than the gender.

Among the comments of those who expressed their frustrations, several themes predominated: (1) women are seen as stereotypical females first and professionals second; (2) women have to prove their competence in each new situation whereas their male colleagues are automatically judged competent; (3) there is an exclusion of women administrators from the "old boy network."

Some typical comments made about being seen as stereotypic women are the following:

> The male administrators of a group are recognized by their title of "Dr." whereas I, with my doctorate, am called "Mrs.";
>
> Comments and sexual inuendos are made to me by male colleagues at inappropriate times, assuming that because I am female I would welcome the opportunity to share their beds;
>
> Men make passes to try to assert authority: some men always take a position above a woman; and if they can't on the job, they'll try it other ways;
>
> I have been patronized by older male administrators who think that my goals and aspirations are "cute";
>
> I have been introduced by my male colleagues as the beautiful member of the group.

Regarding the concern that women have to prove their competence, it was mentioned by several that this is particularly true in areas in which women traditionally have been less knowledgeable, such as finance and data processing. It was pointed out that school board members are particularly skeptical about the competence of women managers.

With reference to the exclusion of women from the "old boy network," several mentioned that they miss out on the opportunity to meet informally over lunch or a drink, which is where some of the really important decisions are made. Part of the reason for this exclusion seems to be tradition: the "boys" have always gotten together. However, it was pointed out that it is more difficult for a man and woman administrator to go together for a drink or a meal; for if it occurs more than once, others may talk, and wives may become concerned. Because the informal male network is not available to them, several women stressed the need for female support groups.

Several discussed the lack of women role models. One mentioned a male mentor who was very helpful. He could not, however, model being an effective administrator while handling the demands of being a wife and mother.

Other frustrations expressed by the respondents were that other women are sometimes the most difficult to work with; discrimination and harassment are directed against women administrators by some administrators, board members, and certain ethnic groups; every husband/administrator has a wife, and every wife/administrator needs a "wife"; being a woman administrator is lonely; administration requires a "thick skin" against criticism and politics.

One respondent stated that men admire cool, competent, well-organized, and <u>silent</u> women administrators, and another lamented that she is tired of

her ideas being seen as credible only when they have been reiterated by a male. Another commented that most men feel that there is no discrimination against women administrators in the community college system.

Some Anecdotes and Comments

The women administrators were asked to share anecdotal experiences or comments. Several shared experiences related to the fact that people view women administrators as stereotypical females rather than as professional administrators. One respondent said that whenever she goes to lunch with a male colleague, unless it has been made clear that there are to be separate checks, the bill is always presented to the male even when she has made the reservations and has taken the lead in ordering the meal.

Another administrator reported that seven division chairmen still roar with laughter about their experience with her at a bar. They ordered seven cocktails and one coke. A waitress delivered them to the table, automatically setting the coke in front of the one female in the group, an error the waitress will never forget.

During an interview for a top-level administrative position, stated a respondent, one of the male interviewers commented: "Well we've finally got someone better to look at!"

One administrator reported that men have a very hard time remembering that she is really not an administrative assistant. That appears to be as far as women are expected to go in a community college, she added.

Some who were surveyed related incidents that indicated sex discrimination. For example, one respondent stated that when eligibility lists (merit system) for positions were used, she was ranked number one on a list of about thirty for a dean position. One was to be selected from the first five on the list, but, instead, the board chose to cancel the list and selected the man who was ranked seventh.

Another administrator wrote that a number of years ago she was an applicant for an activities dean position. She was told during the interview that this position required a male because of the nature of the responsibilities related to athletic events and student discipline.

Twenty years ago when she was an applicant for her first position in a community college, explained one of the respondents, an interviewer pointed out to her that she had been married only a year, and since she was in her early twenties, she would probably quit to have children.

Another administrator told about a salary negotiating interview in which the director told her that she shouldn't expect more than she was really worth just because she was "a cute young girl." At the time she was over thirty years old and felt that at no point during the interview had she given the director reason to see her as a "girl" at all.

When she was a college freshman, reported one administrator, her advisor told her she could get nowhere in the profession of her choice because

she was a woman. After looking around for alternatives open to women, she selected the field of education.

One respondent stated that she felt far more pressure and possible prejudice because of her husband's Spanish surname than she ever had due to the fact she is a woman.

Women administrators frequently find themselves to be the only woman in a group of male colleagues. One administrator commented that she hopes one day to write a book called "Gentlemen . . . . and Alice" because this is how the administrators so frequently are addressed.

Another woman said her "bath in fire" as a female administrator in a male world was brought home during a visit to a college in the company of three male colleagues. They were involved in a very important discussion. The men peeled off to the men's room. Upon their return, she reentered the discussion only to be told, "Oh, we settled that."

Perhaps the concluding comment of one of the respondents best expresses the feeling of many of those who shared their frustrations at being a woman in the male-dominated world of educational administration: "When surveys like this one are no longer conducted, women will have achieved equality!"

CONCLUSIONS

Similarities With Counterparts in the World of Business

Is the woman in the community college administration confronted with the same hazards and frustrations as women executives in business? This study indicated that there are many similarities. Women administrators, like their counterparts in business, state that they must constantly prove their competence in management, whereas their male colleagues are assumed to be competent by virture of the fact that they have achieved an administrative position. As in the business world, there are few women role models and mentors to assist and train the young administrator as she begins her climb on the administrative career ladder.

Because there are very few women in this traditionally male field, women administrators, like women business executives, find that they are excluded from the "Old Boy Network"; some of the informal channels for communication and decision making are closed to them, and they are beginning to develop women's network support groups to fill this gap.

Women administrators, like women business executives, enter a world of political game playing, for which the rules have been developed and are understood by male players; the woman manager must learn the rules in order to survive the competition for career advancement and to succeed as an executive.

Women community college administrators are frequently viewed as stereotypically female. Being taken for a secretary is a commonplace annoyance of women administrators, just as it is of women business executives. Sometimes at committee meetings where an administrator is the only

female, it is assumed that she will take on the secretarial or clerical responsibilities of the group. Others expect that women administrators will be more emotional and less logical than their male colleagues--traits considered ineffective in management. If they are not aggressive leaders, women are seen as weak females, but if they are strong leaders, they are seen as "unfeminine." If they are attractive, males may be confused about how to relate to them; thus, women have to be able to handle sexual overtures from male colleagues without offending them.

As in the corporate world, sexual discrimination in hiring is reported by a substantial number of women community college administrators. Also, some women report that their ideas are not listened to unless they are reiterated by a male colleague.

Differences Between Female and Male Administrators

While some respondents reported that there are no differences between female and male administrators that are associated with gender, the majority did state differences and were fairly consistent with one another in the differences they described.

Attributes ascribed to women administrators were that they are more humanistic, more open and honest, do not play games, are more thorough, work harder, and are frequently more competent.

Characteristics of women administrators that can cause difficulties are that they are less experienced in the game of politics as well as finance and management, they are less assertive and less competitive, they are more vulunerable to disappointment and criticism, and less inclined to plan career goals.

Advice for Women Aspiring to Administrative Careers

Survey participants had many suggestions for women planning an administrative career, but the following recommendations were made with some frequency: Women administrators need diverse experience and training--a doctorate is recommended; they should become experts in some area, and actively seek leadership roles.

They will have to work harder, longer, and be more dedicated than their male colleagues, and will have to channel their energies in many directions. They must be competent, keep calm, maintain a sense of humor, and be flexible.

Women administrators must be willing to take risks and make decisions. Assertiveness and the ability to negotiate are other qualities they should develop. Women administrators should set goals in career planning, and it is important that their families be supportive.

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